AS TOLD BY HUNTERS.

Fine Batch of Odd Stories About Wild Ducks

AND TWO WERE SUICIDES.

Birds That Drowned Themselves to Escape the Gunner.

One Shot That Killed 47 Ducks, to Say Nothing of the Wounded—Power of the Mallard in the Air—Two Decoy Ducks That Played Truant and Didn't Like It—A Gunner Who Lost His Boots But Saved His Ducks—Judge King's Catch-as-Catch-Can Bout With a Tarpon—Wild Turkeys in Texas—Many Deer in the Northwest.

If the testimony of two trustworthy sportsmen be taken at face value, it seems to be true that ducks under certain circumstances commit suicide. This has been a mooted point among gunners for a long time.

C. B. Bannister of Bloomington, Ill., is one of the witnesses. He was shooting last season in the neighborhood of Antigo, Wis. One morning he was standing knee deep in the water fifty yards from shore.

He had a natural blind in the form of a clump of willows. The water was as clear as glass about him, but thirty yards further out wild rice grew. He had out a dozen decoys near the inner edge of the rice.

The wind was blowing against his back and consequently the ducks came in facing him. With every condition in his favor he was doing good work, waiting until the mallards poised hovering above the decoys, then knocking them down right and left.

At 9 o'clock he had killed pretty nearly his daily allowance of twenty-five birds and was thinking of quitting. Then he saw a solitary duck coming in, or rather coming over, against the wind and thirty yards high.

Pitching up his gun when the bird was within extreme range he pulled the trigger of the left barrel which was full-cocked and loaded with No. 4's. Instantly the duck began to descend, wabbling from side to side with a broken wing and coming down on a slant.

He stepped outside the willows the better to watch it fall. It struck the water within two feet of him and instantly dived. He had just time to see that it was a mallard hen.

He stood for a minute looking over the clear expanse, waiting for it to reappear. It did not show. He glanced down curiously. The water which had been rolled by the plunge had settled.

There, not more than a yard from him, was the duck. Its belly rested on the bottom; its sound wing was pressed tightly against its side, the other hung loosely; its neck was outstretched; its bill was clenched upon a tough weed root; not a bubble arose from it.

He was motionless for a minute or more. Then he stooped, thrust his arm to the shoulder in the water and picked up the mallard. Only slight force was necessary to detach its bill from the weed. The duck was dead.

He kept it separate from the remainder of his kill and when he got back to the hotel picked it himself. It had not a wound on it except that the bone of the second joint of the right wing was shattered.

Bannister knows that the mallard hen drowned itself, but does not say that the suicide was intentional. He thinks that the bird was badly frightened and hung to the root in desperate desire to hide until it died.

H. C. Grubb, who buys pearls for a Western firm, went up the Chicago and Northwestern road last fall to dicker with the clam diggers who are working the Wisconsin rivers. He went out to a slough of the Mississippi near Lansing one morning looking for jacksnipe.

He flushed a duck from a shallow pond and brought it down with the right barrel. It fell in the centre of the pond, which did not cover half an acre.

Having hipboots, he waded to retrieve it. It was winged and swam nearly as fast as he could walk. The water was only a foot deep, but muddy; also the sun was hot.

Now and then the duck dived. He chased it for fifteen minutes round and round until the blood in his temples beat an anvil chorus and his eyes started from his head; Grubb is fat.

Finally the duck dived for the last time in water so shallow that the tip of its tail showed on the surface. It was still, and so was its pursuer, who stood panting and swearing between gasps.

Finally he grabbed it and went ashore. It had driven its entire head into the mud to the beginning of the neck. Its bill was open and its mouth was caked with mud.

This duck was of the spoon-bill, or shoveller, variety.

THREE TRAILS IN THE SNOW.

A Lad Who Got Lost in the Woods, Defied a Panther and Saved His Deer.

"When I was a boy up in Allegany county, New York," said B. W. Nelson, "I got lost in the woods one day while taking home a deer that had fallen prize to me in a curious way, and before I found myself I had about as exciting an experience as ever any boy had in the woods.

"In those days the southern part of Allegany county was pretty much all wilderness. Bear and deer were still numerous in the woods, and the panther and wolf had yet some foothold.

"My father's farm wasn't far from the Pennsylvania line. The maple sugar crop was quite an important one with us, and following close on the gathering of that crop the wild pigeons came into the region by the million, and during the nesting time we didn't do much else but kill pigeons and collect squabs, the marketing of which brought more income to the farm than any other one crop the farm could raise.

"It was the killing of wild pigeons that at last inspired me with the ambition to bag game of more pretension. I wanted particularly to kill a deer.

"One day, along toward the middle of March, my father sent me to our sugar bush to clean out the sap troughs and get the buckets together preparatory to the season's sugar making. I seized this opportunity to do a little deer hunting. So I sneaked the old pigeon gun and took it along with me.

"There had been a fresh fall of snow over night. The sugar bush was only a mile from home, and I got through my task there in an hour or two. Then I started on the hunt for a deer.

"I travelled a mile or more through the thick growth, and then bore off to my right in the direction, as I supposed, of a small laurel swamp that I knew. I had gone half a mile when suddenly out of a clump of bushes, not twenty feet ahead of me, jumped three deer. Just on the other side of the clump of bushes stood two second growth pine trees, their stems not more than a foot apart.

"I suppose it was the great fright that my sudden coming upon them gave them that rattled one of the deer so that it sprang forward directly toward those two trees and attempted to pass between them. The space was too small, and only the deer's head and neck entered it.

"Finding that it could go no further, the deer, which was a yearling doe, made a frantic effort to back out of the trap, an effort so frantic that she broke her neck, which killed her instantly.

"The sudden and unexpected jumping up of the deer in front of me frightened me so that I forgot all about my gun, and when I awoke to the situation there was no need of my having a gun, for two of the deer were a mile away by that time, and the third one was dead between the two pine trees.

"After I got over my excitement I pulled the dead deer from between the trees and started to drag it home.

"I had dragged the deer along for half an hour or more, when I was surprised to come upon the trail of some one who was travelling through those woods, either dragging a deer, too, or something else over the snow.

"'And he's got his dog with him,' said I, noticing the tracks in the snow following the trail.

"I made up my mind that I was bearing a little too much to the west to make home the shortest way, and I took a straight course away from the trail of the man and the dog. I travelled and travelled, and began to thing I must be pretty near home, when I came to another trail of a man dragging something on the snow, and the tracks of a dog, as I thought, accompanying it.

"This was getting to be so odd and so spooky that I stopped and began to wonder what it all meant. Then I saw that the man's tracks were exactly like mine. Further investigation satisfied me that they were not only like mine, but they were mine.

"Then it struck me with startling force that I had been simply walking in a circle and was doubling on my course. I was lost in the woods. But that didn't account for the dog.

"For the first time I turned and looked back. There, not two rods behind me, a great, gaunt, tawny beast, its eyes glaring, was crouching in the snow. I needed no one to tell me what it was. I was not only lost in the woods, but a hungry panther, attracted by the scent of the dead deer, was on my trail.

"For a moment I stood staring at the panther, unable to move. Then my first impulse was to abandon the deer and flee. The panther crept slowly forward. I nerved myself and resolved not to surrender the deer unless I had to.

"My gun had a charge of pigeon shot in it. The folly of trying to kill a panther with pigeon shot never occurred to me. I aimed at the panther and fired.

"The panther yelled, sprang for a tree near by, and climbed nearly to the top. Without delay, and without any regard to direction, I started on with my deer as fast as I could go. On one side of me there was a good growth of timber and I skirted that. I had gone but a hundred yards when the panther came leaping along from tree to tree, until he was in a tree just behind me.

"I had no more ammunition for my gun, and I stopped and uttered as terrific a yell at the panther as I could find lungs for. The persistent beast leaped back a tree or two and I hurried on with my deer. But the moment I started, the panther resumed the chase.

"When he got even with me in a tree I yelled again. The panther did not retreat this time, and I began to make up my mind that it was a little doubtful if I got to Nelson farm with my deer, or if I got there at all, when I heard a shout come from the woods ahead of me.

"I yelled again, and the answering shout was so near this time that the man who made it came into sight not more than two minutes behind it. The man was a hunter named George Parker. The panther climbed higher up in the tree when Parker appeared, but made no show of retreating. Parker was loaded for panther, and his load went through that one's heart at the first fire.

"I was so glad to see the beast tumble to the ground and give its last kick that when Parker told me I was four miles from home and steadily travelling further away, it didn't dampen my spirits a bit. Parker took the panther's scalp and helped me home with my deer.

"I remember that I drew near to home with more fear and apprehension than I had felt even in the face of the pursuing panther, for my father was a man of few words, but of quick and strenuous action in matters of home discipline; but either the deer or my story seemed to please him, and I not only escaped chiding, but had two pieces of pie for supper that night, something unheard of in our domestic economy."

SO THE DUCKS CAME BACK.

Queer Experience With Two Trained Decoys on Caddo Lake.

Thomas or "Tammas," Cairns is keeper of the Ananias clubhouse on Caddo Lake in north Louisiana. He is a hard-headed, dry-spoken Scotchman with apparently as little sentiment in him as there is in a dish of haggis.

The Ananias Club has a large membership of good shots, good anglers and good talkers after dinner. It is the work of Cairns to keep all of the rowboats, fishboxes, artificial blinds and horses and vehicles in order. In return he gets his quarters and the usufruct of the club farm of nearly 200 acres. He is making money.

Cairns leads a lonely sort of life on the banks of the big lake out in the woods, but does not mind it. When things get a little dull he turns to his ducks, which are his pupils, companions and friends.

These are not ducks kept for laying, or table purposes. They are live decoys carefully selected and bred for their similarity to wild ducks.

They are all dark because the lighter a duck is the worse decoy it makes. Some of them are of precisely the hue and build of mallards. They swim like mallards and their voices are like the voices of mallards, with a slight undefinable difference. Any man who has shot over them will realize that all painted things of wood, canvas, tin or cork are comparatively worthless.

These ducks are used to the detonations of the guns. They are a little nervous when young and first taken out, but soon become accustomed to the reports and the smell of powder smoke.

They feed unconcernedly while the heaviest firing is in progress, when there is silence they splash about and talk to one another, or call to overhead flocks of wild fowl with naturalness. There are more than three dozens of them and usually from six to eight of them are allotted to each boat containing two men.

When a blind, natural or made, has been reached the two gunners take their stand and Cairns sets out the ducks in water not more than two feet deep. A stout cord two yards long is attached to one leg of a duck and to the other end of the cord is tied a sharp stake of pine, two inches in diameter and a foot long. Cairns thrusts this stake to the head in the soft bottom and the duck, securely anchored, swims about much as it pleases.

Caddo Lake is more than thirty miles long by five miles wide in places, so there is plenty of shooting water. The live ducks pay no heed to the dead ones falling among them. If they know what is going on they are heartless.

Not long ago Cairns, being somewhat hurried, set out a batch of ducks without first examining the strings tied to their legs. Two of them worked loose after a while and got away before the gunners noticed their absence.

They had been placed some five miles from the clubhouse, and Cairns was disconsolate. He felt as if had lost a couple of children.

Two days later, while on another part of the lake, he saw a large flock of mallards feeding some 200 yards ahead. They flushed as he neared them.

Two were left behind, and these swam rapidly into a thick growth of cypress and water growth. He knew they were his ducks, but could not find them.

This increased his sorrow. He called to them: "Honey! Honey!" as is his habit in talking to them, but they were deaf to him.

More than a week went by. He was paddling down the lake, returning from fixing a blind, when from a great group of mallards resting on the water a quarter-mile to his left two black dots emerged and came toward him.

His heart jumped into his throat and he backed water to a standstill. In three minutes he saw his lost ones paddling toward him as if for life. They came so fast that each had a little billow in front of its breast.

He called: "Honey! Honey!" as seductively as he could, but it was not necessary. The ducks swam as straight as a rule, reached the boat amidships, flopped on board with squawks and squatted contentedly on the bottom. Cairns stroked them caressingly, kissed them and tied their legs.

He explains this queer happening by saying that the tame ducks found the mallards too swift and dissipated for them and got homesick. The chances are that the pair were unable to feed well in the deep water affected by their wild brethren, knew the boat and swam to it, expecting to be fed. However that may be, they came back all right and were glad to get back.

AT GRIPS WITH A TARPON.

Judge King's Gallant Fight With a Fish That Boarded His Boat.

William King of southern Texas, formerly a District Judge, knows the tarpon pretty well as a tremendous fighter at the end of a line, a voracious feeder upon smaller fishes and an uncertain adversary until it has been gaffed deeply. He also knows as much about the tarpon as a catch-as-catch-can wrestler and clever two-handed pugilist as any man alive.

King, who is small and under weight but pugnacious, gained his knowledge in Aransas Bay. He and a party of friends went after targon in a small yacht-like craft that was fast and crank.

The boat was decked over except in the middle, where there was an opening four feet square above the cockpit, in which the party slept and did their eating and drinking. This cockpit has a room nearly as wide as the boat and some ten feet long. Its flooring was six feet below the opening.

Fishing was good, which is to say that every man in the party inside of an hour hung a tarpon or two and let it get away, which is the usual course of events. Finally, a member of the party got a strike, reefed the barb into his foeman as deeply as a strong arm and wrist could send it and the fun began. All of the others reeled in to get their tackle out of the way and watch the fight.

This tarpon was possessed of a devil. It took out 200 feet of silk on its initial rush and the moment it felt the drag went a yard into the air. They saw that it was more than five feet long and the man who was playing it—or being played with—said that it weighed a ton.

The war, with ups and downs, lasted for more than an hour. Thrice the fish was reeled within five feet of the boat and each time broke away. King, who is excitable, had most of the hour danced from stem to stern, shouting advice, expostulation, encouragement and anathema.

When the tarpon was brought in for the fourth time it seemed utterly exhausted. It came heavily within a yard of the taffrail and its head was raised six inches from the water.

The lord high executioner of the band lifted his gaff to deal the fatal blow. With a mighty bound the fish rose from the water and crashed upon the deck. It was near the cockpit and not a foot from King.

With a lightning sweep of the tail it struck him across the knees, knocked him backward into the cockpit and fell after him, landing across his legs. Then, in the semi-darkness of the little cabin, ensued a combat that would have used up fifty pages of Victor Hugo's best work. It was Titanic.

The men above could see little, but they could hear the thud of blows, which fell like hail, the mighty thumps of falls, the rasping of heavy bodies on the planking, snorts, grunts, gasps and ejaculations.

The Judge and the tarpon had fought the length of the cabin twice and all around the walls once, when a sailor jumped down with a hatchet and ended the match. There was a good deal of blood and scales everywhere, some of them in King's hair. The fish weighed nearly 120 pounds.

It is not an unheard-of thing for tarpon to leap on board of low-lying craft. There is an instance of a tremendous fellow jumping to the deck of a tugboat near the mouth of the Brazos River. It struck an iron stanchion a half-inch thick, bent it six inches out of plumb and flopped back into the water.

On another occasion in the shallow port off this river a negro fisherman, sitting in the bow of a small skiff, was struck by a leaping tarpon, knocked backward into the sea, stunned and drowned.

BOGGED IN A FLORIDA SWAMP.

A Hunter Who Left His Clothes Behind but Saved His Ducks.

An experience of the Indian River country of Florida is told by W. B. Ingersoll, who has done some shooting in most of the States.

"I was alone without a retriever and had shot for a couple of hours along sloughs, jumping acorn-fed mallards mostly and killing or missing as they rose. Most of it was snap-shooting as the woods were thick and the edges of the sloughs lined with reeds six feet high.

"I would get my gun up as I heard the bird leave the water and try to stop it as soon as it showed. I wore a wading suit of mackintosh which came to my breast and was strapped over my shoulders, and often I had been into water more than waist deep, retrieving kills.

"At 11 o'clock, when two miles from camp, I came to an open space and it was green with the freshness of spring. I came to it suddenly, emerging from a tangle of small oaks and vines which grew to its edge, and from a puddle near its centre a mallard drake flushed.

"It was a beautiful unobstructed shot—quite the easiest of the day—and I dropped the drake, a clean kill, with the first barrel. It fell not ten feet beyond the puddle and I started after it.

"My gun was in my right hand and over my left shoulder I had a game strap, from which hung a dozen birds. Their aggregate weight was some thirty pounds and I had about as much as I cared to carry. I took two steps forward and sank to my middle in bog.

"I saw then that it was impossible to retrieve the duck and determined to go back. I made an effort to extricate myself by bearing down with the gun and my left hand on the green surface around me and both gun and hand went under the surface to my elbows.

"I let go the gun, pulled out my hands with a little effort and by that time had sunk nearly to the top of my waders. Up to that moment I had not been seriously alarmed, but I got frightened.

"I made a desperate effort and threw my body half round toward the firm bank I had quitted. That took me in to an inch below my armpits.

"I could feel, or thought I felt, a steady suction on my legs; unquestionably there was quicksand under the bog. I knew that in another five minutes the green surface would close over my nostrils; a worse scared man never saw himself being buried alive.

"I did not lose my reason, nor call for help. Calling for help at the North Pole would have been as useful. I had got rid of the game strap before I sank so far.

"As the Lord would have it a length of rattan vine, swinging from the limb of an oak which jutted over the bog, hung within reach of my right hand and I grabbed it. It was an inch thick and reached nearly to the green, mossy quagmire; I do not know why I failed to see it earlier, but probably because I was too frightened.

"I hung to it with my right hand and with my left hand undid the straps which fastened my wading suit to my shoulders; then I caught it with both hands and pulled myself out of the suit.

"I thought I never should get my feet clear of the boots, but they came finally. I got to the bank in my shirt, drawers and socks, fell full length and lay there, panting like a lizard on a rail.

"I was as wet as if I had gone over Niagara; the sweat ran from my face and neck and made a little puddle on the dried leaves. After five minutes of this I sat up.

"The gun was gone, the wading suit was gone, swallowed utterly, but the ducks on the game strap lay where they had fallen.

"I did what any hunter would have done, I reckon; I got a long dead limb, raked those ducks in, put them over my shoulder and carried them to camp in my stockinged feet, stopping now and then to pull out a thorn."

SO LACKAWAXEN MOURNS.

It Can No Longer Enjoy Its Famed Sucker Fishing and Shad Spearing.

LACKAWAXEN, Pa., March 8.—"I had always heerd that corporations didn't have no souls, and now I know they don't!" said a Lackawacker, the approach of spring moving him to melancholy comment on the passing of the long-time pride and joy of this part of the Delaware Valley, the Lackawack sucker fishery and shad spearing. "The Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, when it shut down its canal, knowed blame well what the consequences would be to the Lackawack sucker fishery, and it ought to hesitate. And yet, by gosh, they went and shut her down! Souls? Why, corporations hain't got no more souls than a tin rooster on a barn has!"

For more than half a century the Lackawack sucker fishery and shad spearing had flourished and carried the fame of Lackawack afar. Their products every spring went north and south and east and west, by railroad and by canal, by buckboard and by horseback, and by the man, woman and child afoot.

There was 200 miles of good river above Lackawaxen, but nowhere in it was there sucker or shad. There was 200 miles of good river below Lackawaxen, and in every mile of it suckers and shad, but not another sucker fishery and no other shad spearing anywhere. So the Lackawack institutions were unique.

Before the canal company threw the big dam across the Delaware at this place to feed its canal shad and all kinds of fish ran up to the very headwaters of the river and the people caught them by the thousands every year by brush seines and fish traps of many kinds. The building of the dam stopped the further ascent of the river by the fish. Then the company constructed an aqueduct across the river some distance below the dam.

The breakwaters and stone piers of the aqueduct threw back the water that rushed over the dam and formed it into deep pools and eddies from one side of the river to the other. The shad and suckers, on their way up the river in the spring to spawn, being held up by the dam, nevertheless continued their efforts to get farther, the consequence being that they would collect in those pools and eddies in vast numbers, pushing ahead and striving to make way above the dam.

Then some enterprising Lackawacker bethought him of the dip-net as a means of lifting suckers from the teeming masses in the pools, and his success was so great that in a short time every man and boy in Lackawaxen and from the hills and woods around had a dip-net and was scooping out suckers by the bushel. Thus the Lackawack sucker fishing was begun.

The sucker netting was well over when the shad spearing season came on at Lackawaxen. All day long and late into the night, all through the month of May, men would stand on the breakwaters and the apron of the dam, plunging barbed spears into the pools and never lifting them out without a big shad impaled upon them.

The bed of the river made it impossible to draw a seine, and the fish were too large to be taken out with scoop-nets. Shad weighing nine and ten pounds were not uncommon trophies and the finest roe shad, not a minute out of the water, could be bought for 25 and 30 cents apiece.

The spearing of shad here by the thousand every spring had been carried on for many years before it occurred to any of the authorities that it was a palpable violation of the game laws of Pennsylvania. Then a shad spearer was arrested one day by a State Game Protector, and taken before a Lackawack Justice of the Peace charged with illegal taking of shad.

The Justice decided that as the law did not say a word about spearing shad at Lackawaxen dam the accused was not guilty, and he was discharged. The law never interfered with the Lackawaxen shad spearing after that.

When the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company abandoned its canal the first blow was given to the Lackawack sucker fishing by the loss of the large and profitable boatman trade. Then, later, there being no further use for the dam at Lackawaxen, it was torn down, and Lackawaxen has awakened to the fact that the pools and eddies below the dam are gone, and that the suckers and shad need no longer linger helplessly there, but can move on uninterruptedly up the stream, to restore to the upper waters their old-time piscatorial pride and boast.

So thus comes to an end the ancient and far-famed Lackawack sucker fishery and shad spearing, and those piscatorial institutions pass into history with the wail of Lackawack that corporations have no souls.

RETURN OF THE WILLOW GROUSE.

Royal Game Bird That a Raid of Wolves Wellnigh Exterminated.

"Any sportsman who has ever handled a gun against the willow grouse and has missed that fine game bird from its old-time haunts in the past few seasons, will be glad to learn that it has come back again," said a New Yorker who has a fondness for the pursuit of rare game.

"The willow grouse's only habitat to-day is the great, far-away barrens of northern Newfoundland, although formerly the bird was found in northern Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and even New York, as well as here and there in Canada; but until last season it had been four years since this bird had been seen even in its Newfoundland haunts. It was as plentiful as ever during the season of 1896, but in 1897 there was none.

"This strange disappearance of the willow grouse was declared by Newfoundland guides and hunters to be due to a most destructive raid of wolves that was made in 1897 from Labrador into the northwestern wilds of Newfoundland, where the resting places and spring and summer feeding grounds of the bird are.

"During that raid, according to the belief of the natives, the wolves destroyed and devoured the birds to such an extent that the survivors were few—so few that the restocking of the grouse covers to anything like their old-time abundance of game required a number of seasons to accomplish.

"Whether this theory is correct or not I can't say, but that for four years the grouse were strangers on their old grounds there can be no doubt. Last season they were back again, though, in something like their former abundance, a pleasant reality of which I have personal knowledge.

"In spite of the long journeys to reach the willow grouse regions and the difficulties that beset one on the way, the willow grouse shooting of Newfoundland has always had a charm to the sportsman who knows the great hunting resources of that country that has made distance, trouble and tribulation as nothing to him.

"The willow grouse is the finest grouse to hunt that flies. It is like the moorcock of Scotland, except that its plumage turns white in winter.

"Feeding only on the berries and the tender buds and shoots of birch and other sweet woods that have stunted but abundant growth on the barrens of Newfoundland, far beyond the outposts of civilization, its flesh is of delicious flavor and juiciness. This bird is shy and wary and strong of wing, and puts the strategy and skill of dog and hunter to the fullest test in its hyperborean covers.

"It is much larger than our own ruffed grouse, which is the only bird I know that can in any way compare with it in all the qualities that go to make a royal game bird."

MIGHTY KILLING OF DUCKS.

Forty-seven at One Shot the Record of O. C. Guessaz of Texas.

In the southern part of the country, especially along the Gulf of Mexico, the green-winged teals sometimes band in enormous flocks.

When they take their flight in the morning the sound of their wings is like a low roll of thunder and is audible more than a mile away.

It takes them some time to get separated, and even in the middle of the afternoon flocks numbering more than a thousand individuals are occasionally seen hurling themselves steadily through the air, or stooping and roaring down upon some pond like a huge black column falling from the sky.

When a half-dozen duck hawks get above a band of this size they gorge themselves and the whirling motions of the pursued birds are wonderful to see. In the forenoon flocks which contain more than five thousand teals are not uncommon. How they rush through space without collision is one of nature's mysteries.

If a man were within easy range of a horde of this kind there is no telling how many he might kill with both barrels. There is no reason why he should not get half as many of them as he could get from one of the flocks of rice birds which winter in the far South.

The people down there call these little fellows blackbirds and the record on blackbrids is believed to be 343 with two barrels. Anyhow, if a man were within thirty yards of one of these bunches of teals with a cylinder-bored 10-gauge gun, loaded with four and a half drams of slow powder and two ounces of No. 8 shot in each barrel, maybe he would kill a hundred.

O. C. Guessaz of San Antonio is one of the best field shots of the South and a mighty duck hunter. He was squatting once in senna weeds in Arkansas county waiting for something killable to come along. It was forenoon and the sky was as clear as a bell—one of those days when a man can see ducks five miles distant and they are all going the other way.

He had a rusted, pitted, old-style 10-gauge Parker, which he had abused for years and its temper was vicious. Its stock had been broken by a wagon wheel rolling over it; it had lain for two days at the bottom of a lake; its right hammer wabbled like a drunken sailor. This gun had been known to run into a farmer's flock of tame turkey in the woods and slay one of its own volition.

Guessaz, who is a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Texas National Guard, and chief inspector of its rifle practice, lay low in the damp and thought of the good times he used to have. Suddenly he heard first a murmur, then a roar of wings behind him and glancing up saw a huge flock of teal, down-swooping. Probably a hawk was after them.

He threw up the gun as the flock passed over, forty yards up, and pulled the forward trigger, the left barrel being empty, as happens in such cases. The band thundered upward and a rain of dead duck began.

They struck the shallow water in his front with a succession of rapid splashes and thumped upon the hard ground on either hand. For a mile away wounded birds could be seen dropping behind and sinking from the flock.

No effort was made to retrieve them. No effort was made to retrieve a dozen or two which fell into the water, broken winged and swam away among the weeds.

Only the stone dead were recovered and they numbered forty-seven.

FEAR KILLED THE BUFFALO.

A Big Bull Scared to Death by the Shock of a Locomotive's Whistle.

"Although I was on the plains when buffaloes were there by the hundreds of thousands," said an old-time locomotive engineer, "I never killed but one, and I didn't mean to do that.

"It was the first year the Santa Fé Railroad was opened up through Kansas. I was an engineer on that road, and one day my train was held up not far from Dodge City by a great herd of buffaloes that were travelling south.

"I ran as near to the herd as I could get, and then stopped to wait until it passed, for I might as well have dashed my engine against a stone wall as try to force a way through that living mass.

"Of the buffaloes that could see us, which were only those on the edge of the herd, only one seemed to be disturbed by our intrusion on that vast prairie. This was the enormous bull I referred to.

"He actually towered head and shoulders above his fellows. He was near the head of the column, and left the ranks when he stepped upon the railroad.

"Advancing toward the locomotive he came to within a few yards of it, where, with nose to the ground, he pawed the dirt and bellowed and snorted defiance, showing every disposition to forcibly resent our coming into his domain.

"As he stood there in the middle of the track, becoming fiercer and fiercer, I pulled my whistle valve wide open. Such a wild, piercing, hair-raising shriek as that locomotive let go had never split the air in that far Western country before.

"It struck the great bull with such terror that he rose on his hind feet as if he had been shot up by a blast, his immense head and shaggy mane and ponderous shoulders towering straight up in the air. An instant the bull stood that way, his eyes big and staring with terror, and then he toppled over like a falling tree and came down in a heap across the track, making everything tremble.

"He was dead before he struck the ground for there was not even the quiver of a muscle as he lay. I had scared him to death with that awful shriek of my locomotive."

WILD TURKEYS STILL FOUND.

That Is Shown by the Great Roost Two Hunters Saw in Texas.

While the wild turkey, noblest of America's feathered game things, is extinct in many parts of the country in which it was once numerous, it is still plentiful in regions which are thinly settled and are climatically suited to it.

It is to be had in every State of the South below the Virginia line; it is in the Ozark region of Missouri; it is in Oklahoma; it is especially numerous along the streams of the Indian Territory. In general, the further South one goes the more plentiful the turkey becomes until the southern limit of the United States is reached.

There are several varieties of it, but the differences are only slight. A wild turkey is a wild turkey everywhere.

It seems to do better in a prairie country than in one that is wooded, though trees are a necessity to it. When inhabiting prairie lands it roosts along streams that are fringed with cottonwoods or willows.

There is always more or less underbrush in these narrow lines of forest, which affords cover. Wild turkeys which live in woods are darker than those which live in the open, and they are larger.

There are more of them now in the Indian Territory and in southwestern Texas than in any other two regions of the union. This is due to the fact that in both localities the land, the food and the water are suited to them and they are less hunted.

Southwestern Texas is still a country of cattle ranges and will be for a long time to come. In Live Oak county, Texas, a county which is half covered with the small tree known as the postoak, a man fifteen years ago could kill a wagonload of turkeys in a day.

He cannot do that now, but he can kill more in two hours than he can lug home in four. That is pretty fair killing.

This is an instance of the number of them still to be encountered in that region south of the International and Great Northern Railway and west of the San Antonio River: Last fall James L. Sullivan and two friends were hunting jacksnipe on one of the prairies of Nueces county.

They were shooting over some soggy land which lay near to Willow Creek. Near sunset they gathered at the four-seated cart which had brought them to the ground and prepared to go to camp. Snipe were ankle-deep in the bottom of the vehicle and they were satisfied.

Looking eastward Sullivan saw at a distance of a mile or more a large flock of sheep which were making their way slowly toward Willow Creek, grazing apparently as they came. He could not see the shepherd and called the attention of his companions to the animals.

They watched idly while the negro was getting the two mules into harness. Five minutes later one of the party exclaimed: "By George! They're turkeys!"

Two minutes later they saw that he was right. This flock, which numbered possibly 500 individuals, was making its way to roost.

It walked rapidly. Before dark it was seen to strike the thick fringe of creek trees a mile above the spot where the hunters stood.

Next morning they found the roost before daylight without trouble and killed a half-dozen of the great birds. They broke camp that day and returned to business.

At best they could have had roost shooting for only a day or two, as the birds would have scattered if molested further.

This roost was, of course, of unusual size. In fact, it was probably the largest ever noted in the Southwest.

Roosts of a hundred or more, however, are common enough along the lower Nueces, Sabinal, Frio, Leon and Rio Grande rivers. The birds are difficult to reach in daylight, but may be shot with little trouble at dawn or on moonlit nights.

GAME FIGHT OF A MALLARD.

Battle in the Air Between a Duck and a Hungry Hawk.

The strength in the air of a fullgrown mallard is considerable. Howard Crutcher, a surgeon of Chicago, tells of a battle royal between earth and sky which he saw in Louisiana.

Swamp Lake is a body of water not more than a mile long and a quarter-mile wide, which lies in the eastern part of Bossier parish. There is a dark hawk in that country which the negroes call an eagle. It is not so large as the bald eagle by one-fourth, but it is just as savage and is strong.

Perched on top of a cypress 100 feet above the lake was one of these hawks. It was nearly noon and the ducks were hidden in the flags and water growth. The hawk was hungry.

On the lake in a flat-bottomed, blunt-ended punt was Crutcher. A negro boy, born tired, stood in the stern and forced the punt slowly with a pole.

A mallard drake, every jewelled feather gleaming in the sun, flushed thirty yards in front, going upward and forward fast. Crutcher undershot it with the right barrel, further undershot it with the left and swore loudly.

The hawk leaped in air and with no regard to the men in the boat plunged with the velocity of a comet. It struck the mallard back of the wings and nailed it with its talons. Its hold was far enough back to permit free play of the duck's pinions and the fight began.

The drake squawked dismally, and, still desperately straining upward, the pair rose fifty feet, their wings beating the air violently. Then the mallard bore downward, its weight aiding.

Despite its utmost resistance the hawk was carried with it until the two were not more than a yard above the water. At this time they were 100 yards from the boat.

Then the hawk by mighty efforts lifted its prey some ten yards up and the two began to travel in small circles, neither rising nor falling. The duck uttered a cry now and again; the hawk was silent.

It did not attempt to use its beak. Once it had lowered its head as if to strike, but was buffeted by the mallard's wings and did not repeat the attempt.

The pair so battled for a space of five minutes, with neither gaining an advantage. It was evident that the hold of the talons was only through the skin of the back, and that the duck was not disabled.

Gradually the superior wing-spread and strength of the hawk told. The couple, locked in the embrace of death, began to go upward. Progress was not rapid, but sure.

The hawk was carrying the four pounds' weight of the duck and fighting against its desire to regain the water, but it was competent to the work. When the combatants were seventy-five yards high Crutcher, who had been alternately cheering them and swearing at the negro for his slowness, was directly under them. He shot, but did no damage.

When an altitude of approximately 100 yards had been reached the mallard's struggles ceased. Its head hung down, and there was only an occasional flutter of its wings. Possibly the hawk had managed to drive its bill home.

The dark slayer flew heavily with its quiescent burden to an oak tree fifty yards from the lake, perched on a limb and began to rip the feathers from the body.

DUCK SHOOTING FROM A TREE.

A Great Morning of Sport for Enders With a Single Drawback.

The shooting of ducks in waste places has its peculiarities, and the experience of William Enders, who was down in southern Arkansas, is a case in point.

He went out on Goose Lake early in the morning expecting a big bag. He reached a good place before daylight, set out his decoys, hid his boat and waited for light.

Goose Lake is shallow and contains many cypress trees of big girth. Enders was a quarter of a mile from shore and had no way of concealing himself except by standing behind one of the trees in water nearly to his waist.

This had its disadvantages. He could not see through a three-foot tree to watch his decoys set temptingly twenty yards distant. If he heard the sound of wings and peeked around the tree the incoming ducks saw him—as they will always see anything in motion—and shied off. Moreover, the water was cold.

He stood until nearly 7 o'clock without getting a shot, through probably a million ducks had passed over his head out of gunshot or to either side out of gunshot. He could hear the guns of camp companions booming up and down the lake and he got desperate.

He had a dozen good decoys, was an old hunter and knew that they were set at proper intervals in proper places with their heads in the proper direction. He noticed that the cypress behind which he stood had plenty of branches beginning some ten feet from the surface of the water and these branches had the feathery leafing peculiar to that water tree.

The bark was rough, there were a good many large exerescences affording hand and foothold and he determined to climb it. He was wearing a belt and with this he strapped his gun to his back, then began the ascent.

It was easier than it looked and in ten minutes he was twenty feet up in the tree. There it forked into three large stems.

He sat in the fork with one stem as big around as his body at his back and the others on his right and left. He was as comfortable as if in a chair.

The limbs and frondage were just thick enough to hide him perfectly and thin enough to leave him vision and room to swing the gun. Not much swinging was necessary.

The birds—mallards, pintails, gadwalls and teal—seeing the decoys would circle two or three times around the tree, then come in and hover preparatory to pitching; they hovered almost on a level with him and not more than thirty yards distant. It was like shooting at ducks sitting on posts.

His companions had a long start of him, however. His sidepockets were full of shells. He sat in ease and banged away until nearly 10 o'clock, when the flight ceased.

After a comfortable smoke he descended, which was harder than ascending, got his boat and paddled about picking up the slain. He found forty-three ducks floating belly upward.

Most roses have thorns, however, and the thorn which pricked Enders was the fact that although the seat in the cypress and the shooting were easy and he led every man in the camp on the morning kill, he had not been able to see his birds fall and strike the water. Any one who has ever killed his mallard drake stone dead and thirty yards in air, and has seen him whirl over and over in the fall and strike the water with a splash, sending the drops high, will understand that Enders lost a good deal after all.

WHERE DEER ABOUND.

Evidence of the Great Quantity of Game in the Northwestern Woods.

T. L. Loyd, a railway contractor of Milwaukee, tells of the wonderful numbers and increase of deer in the Northwestern woods. Last fall he had a contract to clear the right of way for a road in upper Michigan.

He and his axemen were in the heart of the woods, the nearest town being Channing. That country is unsettled and possibly will be unsettled fifty years from now.

It is a land of small clear lakes, great trees, tamarack swamps and bogs. The Indians know it fairly well, but few white men have more than a speaking acquaintance with it.

Loyd was in these woods for two months and deer became as familiar a sight to him as sparrows on the Milwaukee streets. His tent was placed a hundred yards from the central shack of the axemen and he set himself to attract the deer, since he is a lover of Nature and animals and a fair amateur taxidermist.

On a stump some thirty feet from the front of his tent he placed a mixture of salt and sugar, a double handful of it, and scattered some of it in the woods nearby. The deer found it in two nights, licked it up and departed. The next night he renewed the supply.

Thereafter the animals became regular visitors to the stump. At almost any hour of any moonlight night after things became quiet he could lie on his cot in the tent shadow and see them gathered about the stump to the number of a dozen, industriously plying their tongues.

In a little while the wood became salty and then it was not necessary for him to renew the supply oftener than once a week. Often arising just at break of day he would see the dun forms stealing softly into the darkness of the woods.

They never showed any fear of the tent or of the fire of the axemen near the shack. It was a daily occurrence that the men in going to and from their work saw deer, either half revealed on the side of the roadway, or crossing it a slow walk.

Mr. Loyd says that the deer in the Michigan north woods are ten times more numerous than they were twenty years ago and that neither the white man or the Indian will ever succeed in shooting them out. Their extinction will come only with the extinction of the woods which shelter them.

That which is true of northern Michigan is true also of northern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota. In fact all of the vast belt of timber running along south of Superior teems with them.

Any angler on a north Wisconsin or Minnesota lake, casting or still fishing for bass, will see from two to ten deer in an afternoon. Near sunset they are especially within sight.

They are fond then of coming down to the water to splash in it, romp along the bank and feed on the lily pads.

Sometimes the bucks swim out for fifty yards or so, then turn and when they can touch bottom trot ashore, cool and dripping. Their branching antlers when they are swimming make a curious sight.

Any man in a boat with a long range rifle—a rifle accurate at a thousand yards—could kill as many of them as he pleased, but this is seldom, if ever, done. The loggers and timber cutters kill them sometimes for fresh meat, and farmers in north central Wisconsin kill them without compunction in the summer because they destroy crops, but sportsmen are held in by rigid game laws.

TEXAS'S OWN FOURTH.

Why March 2 Is a Holiday in the Lone Star State.

From the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Few Americans are aware that in one of the greatest States of the Union the 2d day of March is a legal holiday. Some would be mystified if told, furthermore, that this the date of the Declaration of Independence of one part of the American nation. Such, however, are the facts. The State is Texas. What the Fourth of July is in the history of the thirteen original colonies, the 2d of March is in the history of Texas.

The opening of the year 1836 found Texas in quite an anomalous condition. She was engaged in active fighting against Mexico, and yet seemed to have no other idea than that of remaining a portion of Mexico. In November of the preceding year a gathering known as the general consultation had been held at San Felipe. The name consultation was applied to this because the Mexicans were prejudiced against "conventions." This one fact shows how anxious the Texans were to retain the favor of Mexico. The consultation even appointed a temporary Governor and Council but it yet recognized the authority of Mexico. Provision was made for another council, to meet the 1st of March of the next year. On Feb. 1 an election was held, and fifty-eight were chosen as delegates to that gathering.

These assembled March 1 in the picturesque old town of Washington, on the Brazos. The next day they unanimously adopted a declaration of independence. It was written by George C. Childress, and is considered a strong document. The opening lines are as follows:

"When a Government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived —"

It then proceeds to state concisely and vigorously sixteen separate points in which the Government of Mexico had failed in its duty to Texas. It then states that "these and other grievances were patiently borne until they reached the point at which forbearance ceased to be a virtue." It declares that the Texans then took up arms in defense of the "national Constitution"—that is, the Constitution of Mexico—but that now "the necessity of self-preservation decrees an eternal political separation." It closes by committing the issue to the decision of the "Supreme Arbiter of the destinies of nations."

The first name signed is that of Richard Ellis, the President of the gathering. Then follow the names of fifty-one others who were persent. Sam Houston was one of these. Last come the names of six others who were elected delegates, but were not present, and signed later. Nearly all of the fifty-eight names are now perpetuated as the names of counties on the map of Texas.

After all, however, one can not help feeling that this declaration of independence was largely a matter of form. Practically speaking the connection with the mother country had already been severed. There had been some months of actual fighting. The battles of Concepcion, Goliad and Gonzales had already been fought. San Antonio had already been captured by the Texans and recaptured by the Mexicans. At the very time the convention was in session Travis, Bowie, Crockett and their brave followers were making their last heroic stand at the Alamo. On Sunday, March 6, the last letter written by Travis was received. When the President read the message one member sprang to his feet and moved that the members of the convention arm themselves and march immediately to the Alamo to relieve Travis. Sam Houston opposed this. He claimed that the first duty of the convention was to establish a Government and a Constitution. He offered to collect troops himself and march to the relief.

This he did, but all too late. On the night of the very day when they were discussing it—Sunday, March 6, 1836—the final attack was made. All the world knows the result. The Alamo fell, but its glorious fall made forever impossible the failure of Texan independence, so peacefully declared in the quiet town of Washington only a few days before.